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Fair Rent Committees FOR Defense Communities

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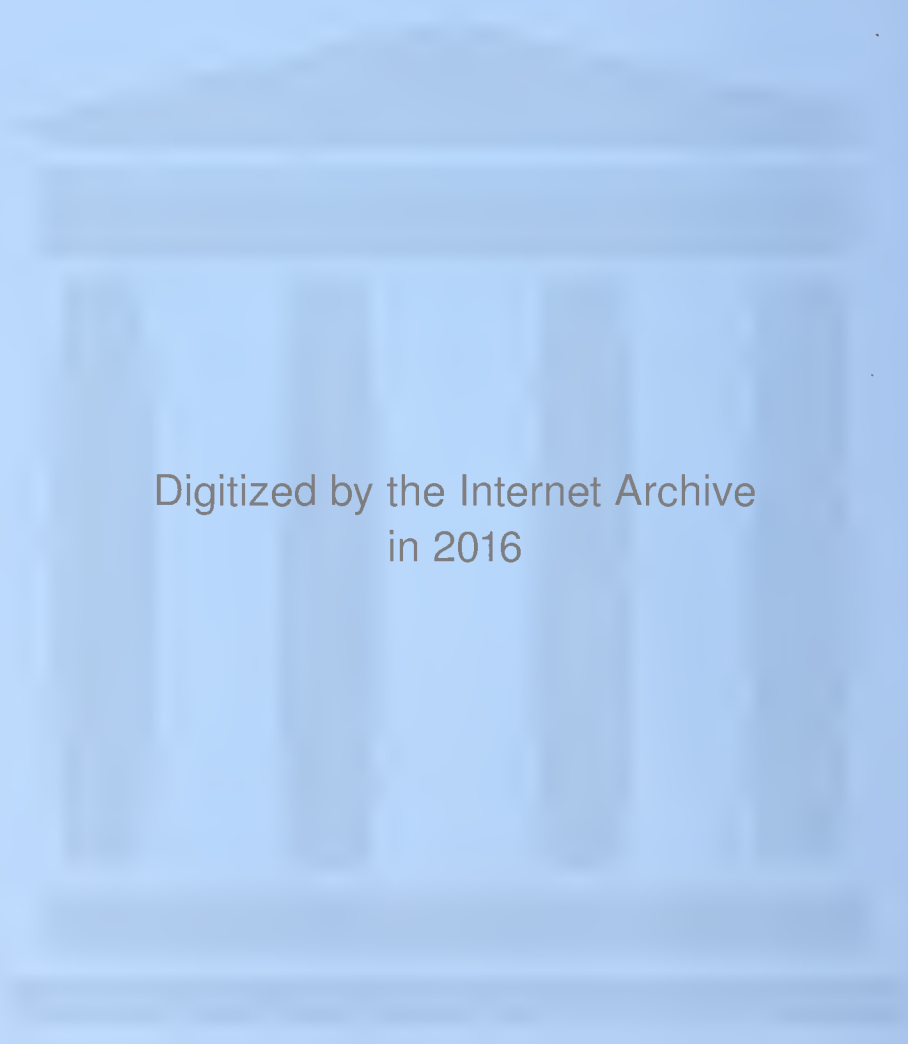
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FAIR RENT COMMITTEES

Suggested Procedure for Local Councils of Defense or Communities



In recent months exorbitant rent increases have accompanied housing shortages in certain defense areas. An undue burden has thereby been placed upon defense workers, upon families of enlisted men and civilian personnel attached to military establishments, as well as upon other civilian residents of these communities.

Therefore, the State Council of Defense urges consideration of the establishment of Fair Rent Committees, especially in areas where there is an apparent or anticipated rent increase, due to abnormal demand for accommodations for defense workers. The responsibility of establishing a Fair Rent Committee should be assumed by the local Councils of Defense or the municipal authorities as an early step in fortifying the National Defense Program. This will help materially in maintaining the morale of workers as well as the civilian population.

The Price Division of the Office of Price Administration and Civilian Supply, Washington, D. C., is prepared to send representatives into the field to aid local communities in setting up such committees and to advise in the efficient fulfillment of their objectives.

Organization and Functions of the Fair Rent Committee

A. Organization

The Fair Rent Committee should be appointed by the local Council of Defense or other responsible municipal authority, where there is no local Council of Defense.

The Committee should be composed of persons known for their good judgment and fairmindedness and trusted by all groups in the community.

The Regional Organizer of the State Council of Defense will assist local Councils of Defense in organizing Fair Rent Committees.

In addition to official members of the Committee, there should be included as consultants:

1. The local sanitary officer or building inspector, or both, depending upon the local machinery for the enforcement of health and safety ordinances;
2. The local welfare or public assistance officer;
3. A representative of the Homes Registration Office, where this service exists.
4. A member of the Local Housing Authority if such an Authority is established in the community.

Municipal departments and local branches of government agencies such as the National Youth Administration and the Work Projects Administration should be called upon to lend clerical and technical assistance to the Committee.

B. *Functions*

It is recommended that a Fair Rent Committee adopt the following course of action:

1. Upon organization issue a public statement urging landlords to maintain rents at the pre-emergency level. Announce the most recent date on which fair rents shall be regarded as having prevailed in the community.
2. Secure full and accurate information on all aspects of the local rent problem. The Office of Price Administration and Civilian Supply, Washington, D. C., will arrange for the conduct of formal rent surveys through the cooperation of technically competent government research agencies. Surveys are now in progress in more than 100 communities, and others will be undertaken upon request.
3. Upon the completion of an official survey, publicize the findings and draw appropriate conclusions.
4. Invite the general public to file with the Committee specific complaints against rent increases. In instances where there is substantial evidence of profiteering, request both the tenant and the landlord to fill out appropriate forms describing the case at issue. These forms should be available in the permanent office of the Fair Rent Committee.
5. When cases are selected for negotiation, summon the parties concerned to a hearing.
6. The cardinal principle in judging each case is the maintenance of rents at the pre-emergency level. Increased costs in services since the declaration of the emergency should be taken into consideration.
7. Should either party refuse to accept the mediation of the Fair Rent Committee, it may choose to present the facts of the case to the general public.
8. The field representatives of the Price Division of the Office of Price Administration and Civilian Supply, Washington, D. C., and the Regional Director of the State Council of Defense, will confer with the Fair Rent Committee at regular intervals in order to keep them informed about current methods and procedures in effect in various communities throughout the country.
9. The Committee in turn should communicate with the Price Division of the Office of Price Administration and Civilian Supply, 2501 Q Street, Washington, D. C., through the State Council of Defense, Harrisburg, Pa., in reporting on the success of its efforts in maintaining fair rents.
10. The Price Division of the Office of Price Administration and Civilian Supply, Washington, D. C., will issue bulletins suggesting organizational work and will furnish forms for recording data in connection with complaints.

It is the expectation of the Price Division of the Office of Price Administration and Civilian Supply that Fair Rent Committees will succeed in curbing rent increases in most communities. Should these methods fail of their purpose it will be recommended that available legal steps be taken to control rents in these areas.